

# Northeast Consortium

## High Schools

SHERWOOD HS  
PAINT BRANCH HS  
SPRINGBROOK HS  
BLAKE HIGH SCHOOL

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February 9, 2023

Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Ave  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Council President Glass, Council Vice President Friedson, and County Council Members:

My name is Henriot St. Gerard, and I am the Area Vice President (AVP) for the Northeast Consortium (NEC) and a Sherwood Cluster Coordinator. I am a parent of two children enrolled at Greenwood Elementary, with a third child at Rosa Parks Middle School. Thank you for allowing me to speak on the FY24 Capital Budget and Supplemental Appropriations to the FY23 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY23-28 CIP.

I am here tonight to discuss two topics. First, to provide you with an overview of the CIP needs of our NEC schools and second, to discuss the impacts of not fully funding CIP requests and delaying school capital projects throughout the county.

The NEC is made up of schools that fall under the Blake, Paint Branch, Sherwood, and Springbrook clusters. My colleagues from the Paint Branch cluster came before you the other night and spoke about the space crisis at Burtonsville and Greencastle elementary schools. I want to echo their sentiments on how both schools are in dire need of additions and/or a new facility. At Sherwood, both Belmont and Sherwood elementary schools request feasibility studies for facilities that are both over 45 years old and not ADA compliant. Additionally, all the schools across the NEC have major HVAC needs that require serious maintenance, or a total replacement of its units. Finally, schools across the NEC, especially in the Springbrook cluster, have serious concerns about safety and having adequate school security cameras and equipment around their facilities.

While increased funding for HVAC maintenance and school security are not fully impacted by the Council Staff recommendations, we need to ensure that funding for these activities is executed. For example, MCPS informed us that schools across the county are due for security camera installations sometime this year. Speaking to principals across the NEC, many are unaware of this despite being in communication with individuals at MCPS. Greater transparency with school administrators on the status of these project will help with this matter.

This brings me to the second part of my remarks tonight and that is on the impacts of delaying approved projects and those under consideration. Many of our CIP requests predate the pandemic and cannot be attributed to slowing enrollment growth, as outlined in the January 20<sup>th</sup> memo. For example, schools at both the Paint Branch and Springbrook clusters have CIP requests going back 10-15 years. This perpetual exercise of working with MCPS and other entities to pick and choose winners and losers, along with kicking the can down the road to delay approved projects, is counter to what you are trying to achieve in saving on costs. These actions simply increase the cost of approved projects and delays and/or eliminates facilities under consideration. I suggest and request that instead of focusing on cuts and reductions, the Council, MCPS and other stakeholders work to identify new revenue streams, methods to prioritize and finish projects on time, and measures to be transparent with the project selection process. These things will go a long way to maximize the dollars we use, along with hopefully minimizing waste.

To illustrate my point, I bring to your attention the additional \$30M request for a new Northwood High School facility. As a Northwood Cluster Coordinator at the time, I advocated for this facility years ago, and this project has already experienced a delay from a prior amendment exercise that backloaded funding. The result is an increase in the initial approved amount and a delay in completing the project by another year. This is unacceptable, wasteful, and very common with school CIP projects throughout the county. We need to do better, and I want to work with you on solutions.

Thank you for offering this platform and allowing me to share the thoughts of the NEC parents, administrators, teachers, students, and greater community to the Council. I appreciate the work that you do and look forward to working with you on these and other matters.

Respectfully,

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